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Tibetan Medical Plants

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Tibetan Medicinal Plants. Christa Kletter and Monica Kriechbaum (Eds.) *Medpharm Sci. Publs., Stuttgart, 2001. ISBN 0-88763-067-X 383+xv pages with 51 tables, 46 figures and 415 colour photos.*

This well written book has been produced as a result of years long field work funded through two Austrian development projects to investigate the plants used in Tibetan medicine.

The book looks at Tibetan medicine from a western point of view and attempts to realize the difficult task of proving the validity of health claims stemming back from countless centuries based on traditional Tibetan monographs. As the Tibetan scripts only mention Tibetan plant names, the authors had to enter the challenging area of authenticating these sources by their latin binomials. It must obviously have taken a painstakingly long time of field and laboratory work. In general, 60 monographs comprising 99 plants have been treated each having a Tibetan plant name as its title. Most monographs contain description of macroscopic and microscopic characteristics of the plant parts used as drugs. Anatomical features of 76 plants are provided. Each monograph is treated in the following manner: Tibetan plant classification, botanical findings, plant material, species used, its distribution and ecology, drug,

macroscopic and microscopic characters of various parts of the plant, chemistry, pharmacology, use in Tibetan medicine, remarks and references. The two introductory chapters are intended to get the reader acquainted with the philosophy of Tibetan medicinal practice and habitats of the plants used in Tibetan medicine, resp. Colour plates in the central portion of the book illustrate nice photographs of live and/or dried plant and the drug, well defined micrographs of sections of the drug showing characteristic features.

The book also carries a foreword by the 14th Dalai Lama. It hangs like a quality medal of the work highly appreciated by the foremost authority in Tibetan social life. The book is of immense help to the students and researchers of Tibetan medicine. I recommend it to those working in the field of traditional medicine and ethnobotany, especially traditional Chinese, Tibetan and Indian medicines, as well as to librarians who may like to keep it as a rare, reliable and valuable reference source for Tibetan medicine.

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